



International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)

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January 18, 2007

Deborah Platt Majoras, Chairman,
Federal Trade Commission
Office of the Secretary
Room H-135 Annex N
600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C.

Re: Identity Theft Task Force

Dear Chairman Majoras,

The Identity Theft Task Force strategic plan recommendations on improving effectiveness and efficiency of the federal government's activities regarding identity theft are a very important activity. We commend the work of the Task Force. We agree that within reason we need to protect Americans from identity theft.

We do wish to bring to your attention, however, several concerns with the proposal regarding the collection and uses of Social Security numbers.

The genealogical community relies on the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) for using social security numbers in order to obtain death certificates and other records, including military records and probate records, of **deceased** US residents and citizens. These records may include a deceased's person's Social Security number. In addition to genealogists, historians, social scientists and medical researchers rely on access to records that may include a deceased's social security number.

Genealogy is not only a hobby of millions of people, it assists in tracing family medical problems that are passed on from generation to generation, and these records are required in order to help determine certain genetic traits that ancestors may have also had. A 2005 poll performed by Market Strategies, Inc. and Generations Network.com (formerly known as MyFamily.com) shows 73 percent of Americans are interested in discovering their family history. As genealogists and family historians, we want to assure continued access to copies of records of deceased individuals that include Social Security numbers.

We respectfully bring to your attention that the use of the Social Security Death Index may be used as a **deterrent** against identity theft, as a tool to check if someone using a Social Security number is in fact using a deceased's social security number fraudulently. Using the SSDI as a preventative tool against fraudulent use of a deceased's Social Security number would negate the need to prohibit access to records with a deceased's Social Security number. Therefore, the Identity Theft Task Force should permit the continued access to death certificates and other necessary records which does not negatively impact the desire or need to protect the lives of the living.

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The IAJGS is the umbrella organization of 77 genealogical societies worldwide whose more than 9,000 members are actively researching their Jewish roots. We want to continue to allow our members the maximum access to these vital records.

Sincerely,

Jan Meisels Allen

Jan Meisels Allen, Director
International Association of Jewish
Genealogical Societies and Chairperson,
Public Records Access and Monitoring
Committee